

1Peter 11-05-20b

We're ready now to pick up our study in 1 Peter chapter 4, we're looking at the end of verse 7, but the end of all things is at hand, therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And Ken reminded me of a good thought on the break. You remember when we studied Ezekiel and the judgment of God was about to descend on Jerusalem and God found the marking angel and he sent the marking angel out and he said, put a mark on certain people and they will be exempt from this judgment that is about to fall.

Who were those people? Did he say, go find the people that are social activists, go find the people that are making a difference, go find the, nothing wrong with activism, don't get me wrong, I'm just saying. Who is it that God sent the marking angel to preserve? It was those who were sighing and crying over the moral decay and unrighteousness in Jerusalem. Sighing is personal distress, crying is prayer, it's appeal to God.

This is not crying in the sense of weeping, this is crying out, crying out to God. And there are some cases where even though you love your child, you know they need discipline or they're going to be the worst for it. Sometimes even though you love your country, you look at it and realize that if it doesn't get some judgment and some discipline, it's going to be the worst for it.

And sometimes people within the nation of Israel would look around and say, if God does not do something, we will be lost, we will be destroyed, we will cease to be. God must intervene on our behalf for his namesake. And these people were sighing and crying over Jerusalem.

And God said, you send the angel and mark those people. And you remember when we studied that, it was so interesting to me because the angel, he didn't say, hey angel, come here, get a pen and get some ink. This is the marking angel, he's always up there.

His belt always has the ink and the quill in it. In every generation, there is a marking angel. In every generation, there are those that God marks out as special and precious in his sight because they care about the things of God, they care about the righteousness of God.

It's such a beautiful thing to see, it's very motivating, that God is always keeping track. Same thing that it says in the New Testament, God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith, your labor of love. God is not unrighteous.

He doesn't overlook it, he marks it, he remembers it. It's written in the book, it is recorded. These are the overcomers, these are the ones who are going to inherit the white stone, the new name, partake of the hidden manna, walk with Christ in white, rule with him on his throne, and enter into these things.

If you care about the things of God now, these are wonderful rewards. If you don't care about the things of God, Jesus could hand you the white rock and you'd say, it's a rock, manna, we've got

trees, why are you giving me this manna? Manna is like pilgrim food, that's like backpacking food, look we're in the millennial kingdom, look at all this other kind of food we've got, why are you giving me manna? These rewards, if you look at the overcomer rewards in Revelation 2 and 3, a new name, I've already got a name, what do I need another name for? Is this going to be like changing my telephone number, am I going to have to go back and order all new stationery? Who is going to appreciate the overcomer rewards? They are meaningful because you are invested in heavenly things, because you love the Lord Jesus. Patty found a thing in my little gadget box, it came with all of my Marine Corps rank insignia and tie tacks and buttons for the dress uniform and all that, and I still keep that kind of stuff in it now.

Well, there's a little chip of rock on there, and Patty came in and she said, what is this? And I said, well, it's a rock, and she said, well, what's it for? And I said, well, last summer when my sister came out to visit and we went for a walk in the woods, when we were little kids we'd always go up there and look for arrowheads after a rainstorm, well it had been recently raining so we went up and we were looking for arrowheads. We didn't find any, but we did find some chips of flint, and I found one and she found one, so I gave her the one I found and she gave me the one she found, and that's the chip of flint from my sister. It's a reminder of a really wonderful day that we spent that's very rare because she's halfway across the country now, but it's meaningful to me because of who gave it to me.

It's meaningful to me because of what it represents. Well, these overcomer rewards are meaningful because of who they come from and what they represent if that's your heart, if that's your mind, if you are the kind of person that says I'm going to have the mindset that the Lord Jesus had, and I am going to live my life no longer worried about the sin that I'm having to walk beside. It's there.

I can't change it. Just like poverty. Jesus said the poor you will have with you always.

I don't care. Nothing wrong with soup kitchens. Listen, I think most of us probably make donations to various charities, and we've got a great union gospel mission right here in Dallas that does a wonderful work for the poor.

Nothing wrong with helping the poor. You look at what the rich man got in for because he did not help the poor man on his doorstep. It's not what I'm saying.

That's not what Peter is saying. What Peter is saying is this isn't where your investment is. I'm not relying on check stubs to the union gospel mission for my blessing and reward in heaven.

This is like the servants that come in from the field and then make the master's meal. We have done no more than what we should. You don't get credit in the Marine Corps for showing up for formation.

We've got our six o'clock ribbon formation here. How many guys showed up? Ceremony please,

drum roll. We're going to pin a ribbon on you for showing up for formation.

This is what you're supposed to do. You don't get credit for doing what you're supposed to do. Ribbons, Navy crosses, medals of honor, bronze stars are awarded when you are so dedicated and you are so clear about who you are and why you're there that you go above and beyond the call and your actions and your conduct is exemplary.

It reflects the highest traditions of the service. That's what the Lord is looking for. Yes, if we can, if there's something obvious and significant, if we can write a letter to the editor, if we can speak up in a conversation in a classroom or in a jury room or in any other place and argue for righteousness, if we can write a letter to the censors of the network and say, take those cotton picking commercials off of my TV or I'm going to quit watching your program.

If you want to join a boycott or something, that's fine. But just be aware, it's no more than what we ought to do. Peter says, you people are called.

You're not just any old Jews. You're not just any old Jewish Christians. God, you remember chapter one.

The reason Peter introduces the letter with that is he says, God has called you. It's not elect according to the foreknowledge of God to salvation. You are chosen pilgrims to be scattered.

You're the point of God's spear. Hold your edge. Don't just be mediocre.

Don't just be satisfactory. Don't just show up for formation. Go above and beyond the call.

The end of all things is at hand. The battle is almost over. We have spent enough time, you know, to the extent that we've let this stuff vex us, to the extent that we've been distracted by it and been occupied by it.

Oh, look at how everything is falling to the ground. Look at how it's not what it used to be. Look at how annoying and aggravating these things are.

OK, fine. It's fine to be annoyed. It's fine to be aggravated, but you can't stay there.

Move on. The time is sufficient to do that, to be traveling alongside the Gentiles with all of their debauchery. But the end of all things is at hand.

Here's what you need to do. When the Lord comes, may he find you on your knees. May he find you with your mind on heavenly things.

May he find us looking to lay hold of righteousness by faith, to shine our light by example. And people ought to find it strange that we do not run in the same flood of dissipation. We ought not to blend so well that we can't be seen.

Therefore, and how do you do this? I am I am a big one for figuring out how you do it. It's one thing to say, do it. It's something else to find out how.

How do you do this thing? I'm arranging for a new website for the for the sermon library. And so a couple of guys came over and oh, my, is it depressing? I thought they were students from the seminary. They are graduates of the seminary and have been in business for years.

These guys are are they are the guys that are running businesses and things now. And when I looked at him, I thought, well, I was looking past them where, you know, did you all just come along to observe? Where are the real guys I'm going to be talking to about the website? No, these are them. And they need they need an export of our data.

I need to take the data that we currently have in our old, creaky, poorly written website. And I need to give them a fresh copy so that they can make a nice, shiny new website that jumps up and down and shows up on mobile devices and and does podcasting and tweeting and tweeting and all kinds of this other stuff. They're going to do this.

Well, so I needed to get the data out. And so I'm thinking, well, OK, and they mentioned that, you know, we could really use a clean set of data. OK, fine.

No problem. Well, I don't typically I'm busy trying to get data into my database. I don't try to get it out.

And so I'm told you need to get the data out. Well, OK, fine. How do I get the data out? And so I spent my morning this morning breaking the rust flakes off of my brain.

I have, in fact, done this in the past, but it's been like 10 or 12 years since I did an export from SQL into a new database, you know, and made sure all the bodies were buried in the right place. But I had to go find out how. How do you do this? It's not enough to know that I should do it.

Oh, yeah, I remember you told me that you needed that data. Sure do. Yeah, I was sitting right there.

I remember it. Well, I've got to actually do it. Same thing here.

If the end is all things, it is at hand. And if we are supposed to be shining like lights, if we are supposed to not run in the same flood of dissipation, if it's supposed to make a difference, how do we do it? The end of all things is at hand. That's the motivation.

You know, it's like I've known for a long time that company was coming and we really needed to clean the house, but company is coming tomorrow. So now I'm motivated to finish cleaning the house and get everything ready. Right.

So Peter says, you know this, you know, you're supposed to, you know, pushing to the tape and

waiting for the return of the Lord. Well, the end is near. So you ought to be moving at it with even greater speed.

And here's what you do. Be serious and watchful in your prayers and above all things. By the way, what is the function of prayer? Serious and watchful in your prayers.

This want to be sure God's got my grocery list of requests. You know, he might have he might have forgotten since I told him this morning. I'll tell him again.

Oh, Lord, please bless so and so. Uncle Joe's liver, Aunt Sally's rheumatism, you know, I'm I'm feeling bad. Please heal so and so.

Please heal. What does it mean to be serious and watchful in our prayers? Serious means pay attention to what you put in your prayer. If I am going to write a letter to the president, am I going to be as casual as when I'm writing a letter to my brother? I might say anything, a letter to my brother.

I may be frivolous. I may, you know, tease him. I may do all kinds of things.

But if I'm writing to the president of the United States, whoever he may be, I'm going to be serious. I'm going to put some considered thought into it. I'm only get I may only get one shot in my life for the president to actually read my letter.

You know what I mean? We if you're talking to somebody important, if you're making a presentation to someone important, you put on your nice clothes, you give it some thought, you make sure you're organized, you get there with your stuff, you're you're concise and to the point and you present it well and you make your case. You know, they say it's like the ride on the elevator. If you can't get it done in 20 or 30 seconds, you're not prepared.

Well, be serious in your prayers. We shouldn't just go schlepping and slopping and ambling into the throne room of grace. We shouldn't go toddling in there like a two year old with a leaky diaper and making a bunch of distracting noise.

If we are adult children, if we are mature believers, we should know how to put together a prayer, how to make a case to God. Be serious in your praying. Give it some thought for crying out loud.

We give more thought to our texts and our emails than we do to our prayers. And we're talking to the holy God of the universe. Be serious and watchful.

What is watchful, attentive, alert? When do I have an opportunity to pray, by the way, perfectly legitimate to pray for physical needs, but pray intelligently instead of saying, please heal Uncle Joe's liver. Why is this situation present in the first place? What could God be doing? Is it just a matter of God overcoming the breakdown of somebody's body or are there people in the periphery? Is it a test of faith? Is it an opportunity for application? Is it an opportunity for that light

of witness to shine to people who might not otherwise see it because you're not in the emergency room every day? And yet here's somebody that's in great distress and they have a strange sense of peace. They have people around them and doing things that is unusual and is attractive.

Look at that sense of community. Look at that sense of peace. Look at the genuine comfort that people who come to visit this person get from the afflicted person.

They come away, they went to comfort and they come away comforted. How does that work? Where is that coming from? What is that dynamic? We pray that God's presence and God's power and God's grace and the story of God's son can come forth in these situations. If you're going to be serious and watchful in your prayers, think the way God thinks.

Why would God let somebody have an affliction? Why would God let somebody's health fall to the ground? What could he be doing? Lord, accomplish your purpose. Try to think it through. Why do I know about this situation to even pray for it? This is why, by the way, me personally, go be warm, be fed, do what you want to do.

But I do not do anonymous prayer requests. Email comes in, little Tommy is going to have a kidney operation. I don't know little Tommy.

I can't pray intelligently for little Tommy. We are local groups of believers. And generally speaking, we to pray seriously and watchfully, we have to know enough to pray a decent prayer.

You're welcome. We get prayer requests from people that we know and we we trust that that person knows and we pray sort of in support of them. But anonymous praying, I could be praying the wrong.

God may be judging that person to bring them to a place of repentance. And I'm praying against the will of God because I don't really know what I'm talking about. You see an adult striking a child and you rush to intervene.

Hey, that was a well-deserved spanking and that spanking is going to turn that child's attitude around to keep them from becoming hell on earth for their parents. They needed that spanking, needed it bad. It was well overdue.

They've had all kinds of they've had mercy for weeks. The time has come to get their attention in the only way sometimes it can be forgotten. You can't just jump into a situation and start praying about it without knowing.

We pray seriously. We pray watchfully. We pray with an eye on heavenly purposes.

Heavenly purposes gratifies me if everybody I know is healthy and happy and prosperous. But is that the purpose of God? Jesus said, not my will, but thine be done. And if Jesus has that mind, we should have that mind.

So he says, you want to know how to do this? You want to know how to be the best influence you can be in your godless and increasingly godless culture? Be serious and watchful in your prayers. Look strange when you don't run with that flood of dissipation and above all things, verse eight, have fervent love for one another. That's what these first three chapters have been all about, haven't they? Be fervently loving toward one another.

For love will cover a multitude of sins. And Peter is almost tongue in cheek here. He's not saying this person commits a multitude of sins and you love him anyway.

He's saying when you see the multitude of sins in your culture, the love in your Christian community will cover that. Remember, God said, if you can find ten righteous people in Sodom, I'll overlook all of the perversion and the homosexuality and everything else in this entire town because the love amongst those ten righteous people will cover over a multitude of sins. If you really want to be salt and light, have fervent love for one another because God will honor it.

God will distribute blessing by association. God will bless an entire household as all as though they were all God fearing, narrow road, straight gate believers for the sake of one person in that family. One person.

God will bless the socks off the whole family because it's a blessing to that person and because their love covers over a multitude of sins that never got properly confessed. Somebody never actually got John 1 John 1 9 or Psalm 51 figured out. God will cover over a multitude of sins because of the love that is shed abroad in the heart of his people.

Love will cover a multitude of sins. That's why he says in verse nine, be hospitable to one another without grumbling. This is the sad thing is we get all of this under our belt.

We hear it. We understand it. We say, OK, we go forth and we do it all.

But we just have to throw in it. Well, you know, I shouldn't really have to be doing this and we just spoil it. It's like dropping a dead fly in the punch.

You know, a lot of good punch. One objectionable object and the whole thing is is worthless. And even though love will cover over a multitude of sins, a little bit of grumbling will wreck the whole thing.

James, what does he say about the tongue? That a bridle that thing set on fire from hell doesn't say you can't wrinkle inwardly. It says without grumbling, if you're going to be ticked off, just keep it to yourself. Don't grumble is verbal.

And hopefully we reach the point where we don't we're not even disposed to grumble. But this is, you know, do you really want the guy to your right with his shield protecting you? Grumbling, why do I keep having to stick my shield out and protect you? Look, somebody nicked my knee here

because I'm covering for you. That's not that's not the hoplite attitude.

That's not the march forward and achieve the victory. Against the principalities and powers, we're in this together and we need to be more forgiving. We need to be more charitably disposed.

Hospitable means charitably disposed. What do you do? You know, this this is this was really convicting to me where, you know, a guest comes and you knock yourself out. Oh, is your pillow soft enough? You know, can I put a mint on that? Did you have what you need and everything? And the people that you love and that you live with every day don't get that attention when he says be hospitable.

This is what he's talking about. You know, that great hospitality that you're able to excrete, you know, on occasion for the visitor. You should have that every day in your community of believers.

It's so again, I'm back to all right. I hear you saying that. But how do I do that? How do I do all of these things without grumbling? Be serious and watchful in your prayers.

Lay hold of that mindset that says I'm done with sin. I'm sick of being the guy that fails and hurts his own family while he's really, really nice to his friends. I'm sick of that.

I'm through with it. I want to put a stop to that. I'm going to pray about it and I am going to be loving.

Have fervent love. Fervent love. It's not an emotion.

It's a policy. It's a priority. It's a value I established for myself.

This is how we respond to the exhortation that God gives us through the Apostle Peter in this passage. This is how we make a difference in our families, in our church, in our nation. If you want to make a difference, if you want to unseat the evil powers that be, serious prayer, fervent love, pause on the sin.

That's how we do it. And what a wonderful practical message the Apostle Peter gives to these people in the first century that is equally and perhaps even more applicable for us because the end of all things truly is drawing ever closer. Well, we'll pick up in verse 10, talk about these gifts.

What are the gifts that minister? How do they work? How do I figure it out? Do I need to know what my gift is? The whole subject of spiritual gifts and being a good steward of them is where we'll pick up next time. But let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you so much for the truth of your word and its preservation, its faithful communication down through the years.

We thank you for the presence of the Holy Spirit to enable us in our feeble and fallen flesh to lay hold of eternal truths and to have the enabling strength again from the presence of your spirit to actually apply it and to lay hold of righteousness by faith in the doing of these things. We pray

that as we move into what remains to us of this life, that these thoughts will remain with us, that the Holy Spirit will impress them on our hearts and that we can be a blessing to our nation and to our culture and to each other as fervent love and watchful prayer comes more and more to characterize our lives. We pray these things in Jesus name.

Amen.